Grant Us Peace

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Grant Us Peace

by Weconqueratdawn

Summary

Hannibal invites Will to a concert. Will thinks about fairy tales, goes clothes shopping with Bev, and has an encounter with Mrs Komeda.

Belongs in the Quicksilver AU - Will is a student and genderfluid, and Hannibal is crazy-in-love. Can be read as a standalone.

"Wouldn't I be a bit out of place?"

"Not at all," Hannibal said. "Concert halls are desperate for a younger audience or they will not have a future."

"You know that's not what I mean," said Will. Though, in truth, it partly was. Hannibal would have acquaintances in the audience, all much older than Will and all busily making assumptions about him. Still, there was something impossibly romantic about accompanying Hannibal. And Will was used to people making assumptions - which he then very much enjoyed defying. "What would I even wear?"

"Whatever you like," Hannibal said. "But, if you permit me, I could help with that."

Notes

This is based on a conversation I had with samui_sakura about a million years ago. It was supposed to be a short ficlet but got away from me. Here are the dresses Will and Bev try on, as suggested by Sammy.

Thank you to lordofthelesbians and wraithsonwings for beta, and also to wrathofthestag for advising me expertly about American clothing stores and where Will and Bev would likely go shopping.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Even in the beginning, Hannibal had never been the type to drag Will off to bed as soon as dinner was over. He enjoyed the ritual order of clearing away, and he enjoyed taking time over his pleasures, whether that was cooking, eating, or an unhurried glass of cognac. Will was no exception to this rule.

After their feast would come a cosy, quiet passion which lasted only until it was quiet no longer. Will would curl up on the sofa to read, preferring a few hits of Hannibal's homegrown pot to a nightcap. Hannibal would never be far away, occasionally sketching at his desk, but tonight allowing Will to use him as a human sofa cushion. He showed no sign at all that he minded. In fact, Will was certain from the firm arm around his middle, holding Will against him, that it also counted amongst his pleasures.

Both of them had books, but only one was reading. Will had lost interest in *Wuthering Heights* some time ago. He knew it almost by heart anyway and reading was too much effort after a voluptuous meal, especially so deep into the semester. Instead, lulled by the rise and fall of Hannibal's chest, he listened to his own sluggish thoughts and the rhythmic sound of pages turning behind him.

Hannibal peered over his shoulder. "Not in the mood for your book?"

"I've looked at too many words this week," Will said. "I've pored over them, mine and other people's, and I'm sick of text of all kinds."

Hannibal put his own book aside, so he could wind both arms around Will. "At least you are being stretched," he said. "Maybe you should have a holiday, when the semester is over."

"Ugh, there's finals first," said Will. "I can't even think about the summer until they're over."

"In that case," Hannibal said, releasing him to stand smoothly, "I recommend music. If you cannot be transported in body, you shall be in spirit."

Will half-expected Hannibal to sit at the harpsichord but he moved past it and went to the record player on the other side of the room. He deliberated by his small record collection, concealed in a carved cabinet with varnish like treacle, before selecting one. The needle was lowered into place and he returned to Will's side.

There was a long moment of crackling silence, emanating from hidden speakers. Then the music began. Its effect was immediate, bursting into the room in a sublime rising chorus of voices, strings and brass. He rested his head against Hannibal's shoulder and closed his eyes to listen. It was hard not to picture soaring spaces of holy stones, of golden light and beseeching praise. After a few short minutes, it ended and all was once more quiet.

"You're watching me again, I know it," said Will. He opened his eyes to find he was right, and laughed.

“I wanted to see your response,” Hannibal said. “See if and where you were transported.”

“What was that?”

“*Dona nobis pacem* from Bach’s *Mass in B minor*.”

“Play it again,” Will said.

So Hannibal did.

*

That night Will listened to many more Bach compositions, plus a little Mozart, Schubert and Chopin. Mostly they were short pieces, but for the longer ones Hannibal lay on the sofa with him as baroque melodies or haunting fugues filled the air.

“How are you choosing them?” Will wondered aloud, after a rather ornate Bach organ piece. “Are they things you think I will like or simply things you want to share?”

“To appreciate anything fully, you must develop your own taste,” Hannibal said. “I am giving you glimpses into unfamiliar worlds, so you can orient yourself. If you would like to.”

“And if I did want to, what then?” Will said. “For instance, I don’t know anything about musical structure, or theory.”

“It’s not necessarily a barrier,” Hannibal said. “To listen, and listen well, is the key.”

“Bullshit,” Will laughed. “Technical proficiency is everything to you, no matter what the art or science. I don’t speak the language but you’re telling me I don’t need to learn it?” He shook his head, in mocking disappointment. “I don’t believe you, Dr Lecter.”

“Perhaps further down the line,” Hannibal conceded. “One night of some of my favourite pieces is a good enough beginning for your musical education.”

“What is your favourite?” Will asked. “Have we had it already? If not, play me that.”

Hannibal smiled at him. “Since you’re so demanding, I will take the opportunity to do exactly as you desire,” he said, taking his seat at the harpsichord.

Will had heard Hannibal play before, but never really listened closely or with any degree of understanding. It had been something which happened in the background while he did other things, another ingredient which contributed to the unique atmosphere of his home. Now though, he paid careful attention, stretching out fully across the sofa to follow the play of Hannibal’s fingers over the keys in his imagination. The brittle delicacy of the notes were striking, as was the comparative simplicity of the repeated melody, weaving into a complex pattern as the piece developed.

He couldn’t resist sitting up to watch Hannibal as he played. His face was revealed in concentration, a mask of intellect and ideas and purposeful grace. Will thought he looked extraordinarily beautiful; almost alien.

When the last sounds died away, Will went to sit with him on the bench. He had the uncanny feeling he'd witnessed something rare, but Hannibal gave no indication that anything unusual had happened.

Will poked at one the keys, causing a soft clipped note to break the silence. "Thank you for playing for me," he said. "That was…" He trailed off, for once unable to put a voice to his thoughts.

"That was the Aria from the *Goldberg Variations*," Hannibal said. "More Bach, I'm afraid."

"Why is that your favourite?" Will asked.

Hannibal put his fingers back to the keys and began to play it again, more quietly. "Ah, but you already have theories about that. Why don't you share them with me?"

Will turned to sit astride the bench. The angle was better to watch Hannibal play. "It's elegant but intricate," he said. "And ordered. Even as it deviates, the music seems to operate within imposed constraints. Plus there's a clarity to the sound, it's unclouded by emotion. Though you like being moved by art, this provides you serenity - you value that more."

The music halted. Hannibal threw Will an amused smile. "How much of that was an affinity for music and how much empathy?"

"At least fifty percent empathy," Will admitted. "I tried to see the music as you might."

Hannibal pulled him closer, his attention now directed entirely at Will. Will put an arm around him and pressed a few keys, this time with more force. "This is your preferred instrument?"

"Indeed," said Hannibal. "From it the music springs into being, whole and entire."

"Each note a perfect moment in time," said Will. "No tentative beginnings and no gradual decline. It begins, and it stops."

"Exactly," said Hannibal, kissing him on the temple. "Have you enjoyed your evening? Is this to be the beginning or the end of your musical education?"

"It's not the end," Will said. "So it must be a beginning of sorts. It's been… expansive." He smiled, and pressed a chaste kiss to Hannibal's lips. "I feel differently stretched."

"All you need do for now is continue to listen," said Hannibal.

"To develop my own taste," Will said. "Except, how it develops will probably depend upon your influence."

"Allow me to influence you further, then," Hannibal said. "How about something longer? A concert perhaps. I could take you to one."

His suggestion took Will somewhat by surprise. The idea of doing so seemed incredibly unlikely - he would never have considered it without Hannibal's invitation. He tried to

picture himself there, as Hannibal's companion, and mostly failed. "Wouldn't I be a bit out of place?"

"Not at all," Hannibal said. "Concert halls are desperate for a younger audience or they will not have a future."

"You know that's not what I mean," said Will. Though, in truth, it partly was. Hannibal would have acquaintances in the audience, all much older than Will and all busily making assumptions about him. Still, there was something impossibly romantic about accompanying Hannibal. And Will was used to people making assumptions - which he then very much enjoyed defying. "What would I even wear?"

"Whatever you like," Hannibal said. "But, if you permit me, I could help with that."

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"This can't be it," Will said. "There isn't even a sign."

"Oh Will," Bev said. "Have you got a lot to learn. This is what happens when you only shop online. You're missing out on the wider experience."

She marched up the short flight of steps and pressed a buzzer. A woman's voice sounded out through an intercom, slightly distorted and too faint for Will to make out what was said.

He scuffed the toe of his boot into the dust at the edge of the sidewalk, before he remembered why he was there and stopped. He'd known it was going to be a fancy place but he'd also imagined being able to walk right in. And being able to see inside first. The tiny window was dressed only with the diaphonous swathe of a single black dress and a spray of white orchids. Nothing could be glimpsed of what lay beyond.

While Bev spoke loudly into the intercom, Will was left to look down at himself and regret all the decisions he'd made so carefully whilst dressing that morning.

"Will Graham is here for their appointment," said Bev.

There was another fuzzy, obscured bit of speech and the door clicked open. Will hastily brushed the dust off his boot.

"Come on," Bev said. "Just walk in like you own the place. They are here to serve. Oh, and by the way, *there's* the sign."

She pointed at a polished brass plaque above the buzzer which read *Boutique Ferne*.

"Of course," Will muttered. "Silly me."

Bev halted abruptly in the doorway, and turned to him. "If you don't want to go in, we don't have to."

Will sighed. "Hannibal made the appointment. And if I don't go, what will I wear?"

“Hannibal will understand. And we’ll find something in Zara instead,” Bev said. “But aren’t you curious to take a look inside?”

“Yes,” Will said. It was true. He might never have another opportunity like this. And shopping in women’s clothes stores wasn’t easy when the changing rooms were out of bounds. “Okay fine, quick, before I change my mind.”

*

Will had only turned up to the appointment through blind trust that Hannibal knew what he was doing. He hadn’t a clue what kind of thing people wore to attend concerts, never mind what he should in particular. That would be Hannibal’s area of expertise, so there was nothing to do but go along with it.

The interior was warm wood and crisp white paint, and the atmosphere less aloof than he’d expected. The two store assistants greeted him warmly then began to ask about the ‘event’ he was attending. Either they were used to having masculine-bodied genderfluid persons turn up on their doorstep or Hannibal had prepped them well. Usually, when meeting new people, he preferred not to catch the inevitable moment of confusion their eyes revealed - having to experience second-hand emotions which were directed at himself was especially exhausting. But they were consummately professional and courteous.

Bev stood at his elbow like a bodyguard. He could sense her readiness to jump in if needed, but she held herself back.

The assistants asked a few more questions, mainly about his ‘personal style’, but when it became clear he could tell them nothing useful he was encouraged to browse.

There were several racks of uncluttered clothing and, displayed like sculptures, a handful of the most opulent gowns Will had ever seen outside of a magazine. They were like something from a book of fairy tales he’d had as a kid - gossamer-sheer minimal bodices, full floor-length skirts, all in the colours of deepest evening and woven with tiny sparkling crystals.

Bev nudged him. “We’re going to have to try those on, you realise.”

Will looked around the shop, doing his best to ignore the assistants silently awaiting their instructions. “But I don’t think there’s anything in here for me,” he murmured. “It’s… the wrong kind of feminine.”

“I know that,” Bev said. “But that doesn’t stop us playing dress up.”

She grinned at him and he knew she was right. The entire store was just make-believe anyway - no one really lived like this. Every dress was a fantasy which would end at the stroke of midnight.

Will nodded, and returned her smile. They were here now, after all. It would be a waste not to.

Bev snapped into action, heading off to mobilise the assistants. They scattered off busily in different directions, and Bev came back to start gleefully looking through the racks. Soon she had a pile of things, which an assistant began ferrying into the changing room.

“How do you find things so easily?” Will asked. He’d tentatively put aside one very simple tunic dress, that he didn’t really like but was an extremely similar shape to something else he already owned.

Bev lowered her voice. “I’m never going to buy any of that stuff, so pick anything which catches your eye. We’re here to have fun, look silly in some very expensive clothing, drink free champagne and then high-tail it off to Taco-Bell.”

“Did you really just say *champagne*?”

“Yeah, there’s some waiting for us in the changing room. They always have it places like this.” Bev caught his look, and explained. “My aunt got married to this super-rich guy, the summer before I met you. I was a bridesmaid and I got two couture dresses and a lot of champagne out of the deal.”

Will looked around the store with a new fear. “Aren’t they going to expect us to buy something? If we’re not going to, shouldn’t we just leave?”

“Of course not,” Bev said. “This is how they do business. If we leave now, there’s no one else coming in to take up their time. And the next appointment will be some socialite who might spend thousands and thousands of dollars. Stop worrying.”

*

The changing room had three private cubicles and a large mirror-clad waiting room with a fireplace and boudoir-style velvet chairs. Two fluted glasses of champagne fizzed patiently in a corner and the clothing they’d selected had been hung on hooks spread over an entire wall.

“Do I even like champagne?” Will said, sipping it cautiously. It was okay, slightly musty and not too sugary.

“You’d better get used to it,” Bev said. “I can see a lot of it in your future.”

They started with the more ordinary stuff - Will tried the shift dress he didn’t really like, and Bev a pencil skirt suit, because she’d always wanted to try *that severe-and-sexy thing*. It turned out that Will had been right not to like the dress and Bev said she could be severe or sexy, but definitely not both at the same time.

Bev had been correct about what to choose - the more outlandish and unthinkable it was for Will to wear any of it in public, the more fun it was to try on. He even found he quite liked a couple of things - there was a dress which gave him particular pause for thought. It had a rich purple abstracted floral pattern which reminded him of the paisley dressing gown he wore at Hannibal’s. But it was extremely short and probably not quite the thing for a concert.

Bev, decked out in sequins and sprawled over a chair, noticed him considering his reflection and smiled knowingly.

“If I wore this with Hannibal at the concert, people would think I was a hooker,” he said, anticipating her thoughts. “And if I dressed it down there would be no point in wearing it at all.”

“Well, if you will fall in love with a Richard Gere type,” she said, snorting at Will’s glare. “You could get it anyway, if you like it. Looks really good on you.”

Will went back into the cubicle and started taking it off. “We’re here to get something for a concert, not start filling up my wardrobe.”

“What would Hannibal say, if he were here? I bet I know.”

And wasn’t that exactly the problem, thought Will. He put the dress back on the hanger with only a small amount of longing. Already he could imagine Hannibal’s hands, lingering along the hem before sliding it up. What were you supposed to do with someone who could and would give you anything you wanted? Just give in and let it happen? Accepting presents was one thing but a blank cheque was something else entirely.

When he left the cubicle, Bev took one look at his face and held out her hands for the dress.

“Give that to me,” she said. “Now this over here is the ‘maybe’ pile. At the end, after we’ve tried everything on, we’ll come back to whatever’s here.”

“Haven’t we almost finished though?” Will said. The assistants had cleared away their discards and there were only one or two things left for Bev to try on. His dress was the only thing in the so-called ‘maybe’ pile.

“Oh no,” Bev said, shaking her head emphatically. “You’re forgetting something.”

With perfect timing, in swept the assistants, each holding one of the sparkling gowns they’d seen outside.

“Which do you want to try - the blue or the purple?” asked Bev.

*

“How does it feel?”

Will frowned, and turned to the side again. The gown was ridiculously beautiful and it suited him more than he’d imagined. Partly that was down to the colour, a deep rosy plum.

“Honestly?” Will said. “Sort of like wearing one of Hannibal’s suits. But on the opposite end of the gender scale.”

Bev looked confused. “Have you been raiding his wardrobe when he’s in the shower?”

“Idiot,” Will laughed. “No, but imagine what they must be like to wear. Like armour, or something. This dress is… femininity armour. Just look at this skirt, it’s insane.”

He grabbed fistfuls of abundant chiffon and swished it around, making it sparkle aggressively. Bev rustled over in her own dress and slipped her arm around his waist.

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” she said. “A touch princessy for my taste.”

“We look like debutantes,” Will said, looking at their reflections. “I bet you’d get asked to dance first.”

“Not if Hannibal were there,” Bev said. “He seems like the ‘would you do me the honour?’ sort.”

“I think you might be right,” Will said. “Although that was fun, I’m ready to return to normality now. Can we get changed?”

“What about the dress you liked?” asked Bev. “Are you going to try it on again?”

It was tempting. In his bag Hannibal’s sleek credit card waited, willing and eager to fulfil his every whim.

“No,” he said, finally. “I do like it and I know Hannibal would encourage me to get it if he was here. But I don’t want to be that person and I don’t want to take advantage.” He undid the zipper on the gown and shrugged his shoulders free. “And I sure as hell can’t afford it.”

*

After a final look in the mirror, Will took a steadying breath and made his way downstairs. Hannibal was waiting for him in the living room, seated at the harpsichord with every appearance of casualness. Will didn’t buy it for a second.

“What do you think?” Will asked him, as he entered the room. “Will this do?”

Hannibal rose slowly, a smile growing brighter in his eyes as Will came closer.

“It’s not what I expected,” Hannibal said. “But you look beautiful. Absolutely lovely.”

He grasped Will by his elbows, then ran his fingers up his arms, over the soft tailoring and the loose folds of his blouse. Some of Will’s nerves disappeared with his touch.

As soon as he’d laid eyes on it, his choice had been obvious. A perfect combination of masculine and and feminine - a relaxed women’s tuxedo jacket, white with black edging. Then it had been easy to find the rest of his outfit - black pants which draped from his hips and a collarless ivory silk top with a daringly low cowl-neck.

“You’re not disappointed? Didn’t want to see me in a big ball gown?” Will said.

Hannibal inclined his head in acknowledgement. “I was thinking more along the lines of a cocktail dress. But I take your point,” he said. “Did I err? Should I have sent you to a tailor

instead?”

“No, the women’s department at Zara gave me all I needed,” Will said. “Luckily for me, androgyny is in fashion at the moment.”

“My apologies,” Hannibal said, his fingers finding the deep V of skin revealed by the blouse. “My influence was misdirected this time, but I’m glad your taste made up for it.”

“It wasn’t all that bad,” Will said, covering Hannibal’s hand with his own. “We had a good time. And there were some amazing gowns, like something out of Cinderella. I've got photos, if you want to see later.”

Hannibal smiled softly, and bent to kiss him. “You don’t believe in fairy tales.”

Will shook his head. “I like stories and I like fairy tales,” he said. “But it’s a mistake to confuse them with real life.”

“Not even for an evening?” Hannibal asked. He looked genuinely curious, as if he had been about to offer to take Will to the concert in a pumpkin-carriage and wanted to know if he should bother performing the necessary magic.

“To create a perfect moment in time, you mean?” Will replied. “It wouldn’t be perfect, because it’s self-deception. A false reality.”

“What about romance? Is that an acceptable kind of make-believe?”

“Romance can be real,” Will said. “It’s like love, it’s something made by those involved.”

“A peace between real life and fairy tales,” Hannibal said.

Will smiled fondly at him and slid his hand into Hannibal’s. Hannibal drew it up and pressed his lips to Will’s knuckles.

“Grant us the peace to remain there,” he said, and kissed them again.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> After reading Grant Us Peace, a couple of people wanted to read about Will and Hannibal at the concert. In the main series, I have some upcoming things planned which means Will is going to see a lot more of Hannibal's social world, so I tried to write a short ficlet. But instead an extra chapter happened? Oops. Here it is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will had expected a taxi to collect them - traffic and parking on a Friday evening would be a nightmare - but Hannibal had ushered him down to the garage and into the Bentley. When they pulled up in front of the symphony hall, with a sinking feeling Will realised why he'd gone to the trouble. A taxi simply wouldn't have made the same kind of entrance.

"You just couldn't help yourself, could you?" Will said, climbing out of the car and straight into the line of sight of a crowd of onlookers. They were gathered in the foyer, some spilling out beyond the doors, observing who was arriving and who wasn't. They looked exactly as he'd feared, dressed in things which glittered and shimmered, clasping drinks to their chests and chattering busily. Alert and watchful, seeking useful tidbits to pass on. All excruciatingly social.

Hannibal handed the keys to the valet and swept round the car to take Will's arm. Will tried to glower at him but it was difficult when he looked so handsome. He wore a dark velvet smoking jacket and a bow tie with a very white shirt. The crispness of it against his neck was particularly distracting.

"No, I couldn't," Hannibal admitted. "The opportunity to show you off was too tempting. But we will listen to the music in privacy, and we can go straight there if you prefer."

Will nodded and let Hannibal lead him towards the sliding glass doors into the hall and the bigger crowd inside. Several of them had already recognised Hannibal, and the knowledge spread visibly across the crowd like flames over oil. Will tried to make his hold on Hannibal's arm look casual and stood up a little taller, hoping his expression didn't betray him too much.

The crowd parted to let them through with a slight frisson of expectation. But when it was obvious they were headed straight into the auditorium and no immediate introductions would be made, the lessening of their interest was an almost physical relief. Will breathed a little easier and tried not to make eye contact with anyone. Hannibal nodded a few times in greeting, but that was all.

They passed smoothly through without stopping and into the blessedly emptier space near the elevators.

“Was that a photographer I saw back there?” Will said. There had been a few flashes, some posed movements and bright fake smiles.

“Only the local press,” Hannibal said, pressing the elevator button. “It’s an opening night.”

*

“I should be angry with you. And I’d have every right to be,” Will said, once they were in the box. Hannibal’s private box, no less. He stood to look out over the hall - only a few people had taken their seats, most were still gathered outside, drinking and talking. “You knew I would hate that.”

A creak behind him suggested Hannibal had taken his seat. “But you are not angry,” he said. “Even though I could have taken you to a quiet afternoon performance instead.”

“You sent me clothes shopping, I expected a certain amount of parading,” Will said. The hall was of a sleek and muscular mid-century design and he realised he’d pictured something more ornate, with plasterwork and curlicues and gold leaf. It would have suited Hannibal better. He turned round to face him, leaning against the balustrade. “But the opening night and the unnecessary entrance were a little bit much, don’t you think?”

Hannibal held out his hand and Will took it, allowing Hannibal to tug him closer and then into his lap.

“So why aren’t you angry?” Hannibal asked. “If you have every right to be?”

Will sighed in resignation. Hannibal didn’t look remotely contrite. “Partly it’s the box. You knew I’d be able to relax here. I did some research before tonight - the sound is better down there, in the middle of the first few rows. And I don’t think it matters how much money you donate or how many committees you sit on or how many fancy benefits they give you, I’m positive you would be sitting there if it weren’t for me.”

“Maybe I want to keep you to myself,” Hannibal smiled. “What about the rest of your reasoning?”

There was a sudden swell of noise from below - the audience were starting to flood into the auditorium, and into the boxes and circle opposite. Will was instantly conscious of his scandalous seat. “Can anyone see us in here?”

“The people in the boxes opposite can,” laughed Hannibal. “So don’t get any ideas.”

Will slid off his lap and onto his own chair. Hannibal took his hand again, and kissed it. The lights grew dimmer, until they were sitting in a theatre twilight.

“Just relax and enjoy the music, Will. It’s why I brought you, after all.”

*

Will surprised himself by how much he did enjoy it. The sound was powerful, overwhelming; pressing inside him and driving out anything irrelevant or unimportant. It was cleansing, almost. At some point Hannibal's arm slipped around him, and he listened with his head on Hannibal's shoulder, no longer caring about the people in the boxes opposite. He closed his eyes and listened, and felt, and thought.

He thought about many things. About why he was here and what that could mean. About Hannibal's desire to show him off. About the crowd of people and their interest - in himself and in both of them together.

When the lights came up for the interval, Will stretched before applauding along with everyone else. Hannibal smiled at him, glowing with pleasure.

"We can stay here," he said. "I can have drinks brought to us if you'd rather not go down."

Below them, people were already streaming up the aisles in search of refreshments. Will considered their movements with grim determination. He felt braver now, more prepared. It would only be for a few minutes anyway - once the bell sounded, everyone would need to file back to their seats.

"Is there a quieter bar we can go to? One not so crowded maybe," Will asked.

There was one close to the box, for that evening set aside just for the use of members and VIPs. Though it was busy, its intimate size meant there could hardly be more than three dozen people inside.

A women with long evening gloves was rhapsodising about how she *simply adored Wagner*, but broke off when she noticed them walk in.

"Hannibal!" she exclaimed, with more than a hint of admonishment. She abandoned the group she had been talking with, and came straight over. "We've all been wondering what could possibly have happened to you. There was the charity auction a month ago, and the Japanese ceramics opening last week which I was *sure* you wouldn't miss. Really, I've been growing quite anxious on your behalf."

Will was certain her anxiety had nothing to do with Hannibal's wellbeing, but she delivered her statement with every sign of genuinely believing in it. She stood firmly between them and the bar, with an urbanity which was brittle, steely, and slightly excessive, all at the same time.

Instead of being drawn into defending himself, Hannibal looked terribly amused and said, "Mrs Komeda, may I introduce you to an extremely important person of my acquaintance, Will Graham."

"So this is why your presence have been so sadly lacking," Mrs Komeda said, grasping Hannibal's meaning at once. "But now I've seen you both together, I understand perfectly." She turned to Will and gave his hand a little squeeze. "Very pleased to meet you, Will, and I'm delighted you could join us this evening."

Hannibal slid the hand on Will's back around to his arm, pulling him closer - an unmistakable gesture, Will was sure. "Will has recently become interested in orchestral music," Hannibal said. "I suggested we take in a performance, so I am really only here on their accord."

"Of course you are, the perfect gentlemen as always," Mrs Komeda enthused. "In any case, we wouldn't want to intrude on your evening."

She eyed them both carefully, delighted and fascinated and looking like she'd very much like to intrude but recognised it wouldn't be possible this time. When they parted, Will noticed she remained at the edges of a group, close to where they stood at the bar.

"Mrs Komeda is a novelist," Hannibal said, in response to Will's expression. "She collects interesting people."

Will nodded, quickly suppressing a smile. "Yes, I can see that."

*

The second bell had rung by the time Will got back to the box.

"Guess who I ran into outside the bathrooms?" he said, as he took his seat. "It was almost as if she was waiting for me."

Hannibal laughed and put both arms around him. "I think you might have been pasted into her collector's album. There's no escape now."

"She said I was *a perfectly darling ingenue*, and that I would be welcome at her parties any time - she particularly wanted you to know that," Will said, grinning. "Is that what she called you as well?"

Hannibal paused, and gave Will a curious look. It was all Will needed to know that his intuition was on point.

"You slept with her, didn't you?" Will said. "Not recently, but she still feels she has a claim over you. Was it when you first moved to Baltimore?"

"Many years ago, yes, when I was a medical student and new to the city," Hannibal said, obviously impressed and not-quite-exasperated. "There's no hiding from you, I can see."

"Now you're beginning to understand why I don't like meeting lots of people at the same time. It's too much information to handle in one go," said Will. And then, with a laugh, "Though maybe I don't mind meeting some people, if I can find out interesting things about you."

Hannibal leaned closer, and kissed him briefly. "If it's interesting things you want, I would tell you them all myself."

"But it helps to know what questions to ask," Will said. "I learned something else today, too. Something meeting Mrs Komeda only confirmed. How many people have you done this with?"

“Taken to an event? Many. Why?”

“No, I mean like this,” Will said. “Making sure everyone sees us together, that they *know*. That’s the other reason I couldn’t be angry about the opening night and the entrance you had us make.” Hannibal was watching him very intently, eyes dark and glittering in the shadowy light. “Being in love with someone in private is one thing - in public it’s something else entirely.”

Hannibal reached out to touch his cheek. “Will…” he whispered. It was almost a warning to stop, but also full of longing to learn what would follow.

“It makes it real somehow,” Will said. “Really real. Not a fairy tale and not make-believe either. Something other people can see too.”

“My love,” Hannibal said. “Everything before you was make-believe. I never wanted anything more substantial than that. It would have been an inconvenience.”

“Which is why I can’t be angry,” Will said. “Because I realised I want everyone to see and understand as well.”

Will closed the gap between them, half-climbing into Hannibal’s lap and sliding his parted lips over Hannibal’s. Somewhere far away, the lights lowered again and the orchestra began to play.

Chapter End Notes

> btw I am totes with Mrs K here - if these two rocked up to an event together, I would want to know *everything about them* too.

End Notes

Here's my tumblr post for this fic.

Please forgive me my terrible musings on music and Hannibal. I tried and so did Will. I know nothing at all about classical music and I've had a crash course in Bach to write this. This blog is amazing and has a great episode-by-episode guide to the music of Hannibal and it really helped.

"Dona nobis pacem" from Bach's Mass in B minor is used in Sakizuke - "love your work" - but let's not dwell on that now ;) - and "dona nobis pacem" is translated as "grant us peace".

For a complete list of all the stories and for easy viewing of all the art, we made a QS website.

I'm on tumblr and twitter (and very occasionally on pillowfort and dreamwidth).

I also write my own fiction which you can learn more about here.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!